Transportation through Bangladesh

5023. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government have held talks recently with the Government of Bangladesh on the issue of transportation from North Eastern States to Kolkata through Bangladesh; and

(b) If so, the extent of progress in the discussion ?

THE MMSTEROF STATE IN THEMINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) The operationalisation of the Agartala-Dhaka bus service was discussed with Mr. Morshed Khan, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh during his visit to India in February, 2003. The Foreign Minister informed that a stretch of 16 kms. of the road on which the bus service is to be operated is not in good condition and that the Government of Bangladesh is undertaking the necessary repairs. The matter was also discussed during the Foreign Secretary level Talks held with Bangladesh on 29th April 2003. The Bangladesh delegation informed that necessary action is being taken for operationalising the bus service.

Expulsion of Iraqi diplomats

5024. SHRIPRASANTACHATTERJEE:

SHRTMATIBIMBA RAIKAR:

SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

SHRIMATI CHANDRA KAL A PANDE Y:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether India had turned down the U. S. request for expulsion of three Iraqi diplomats from New Delhi;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) whether so far, only Australia had responded to the U.S. request by expelling an Iraqi diplomat; and

(d) whether the U.S. request to India was promoted by the alleged involvement of NEC Engg. Company of India in assisting Baghdad for development of a chemical facility ?

THE MINI STER OF STATE IN THE MINI STRY OF EXTERN AL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The U.S. Government had made a request for explusion of Iraqi diplomats from India on the ground of perceived threat by

the United States to U.S. diplomatic personnel and facilities in India. Since there is no evidence of Iraqi diplomats engaging in activities incompatible with their diplomatic status, Government took no action on the U.S. request.

(c) Government has seen reports on expulsion of Iraqi diplomats from a number of countries.

(d) No.

Harassment of IT professionals

5025. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Munister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) Whether it is a fact that several information Technologists and IT Entrepreneurs working in the Netherlands have been recently subjected to immense harassments, including unauthorised detention in custody in that country and in England;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) whether similar hostility has been shown to Indian IT entrepreneurs by the administration in several South East Asian countries also in the recent past; and

(d) the steps, if any, taken by Government to seek assurance from the administration of at least the friendly countries in Europe to restraint themselves from treating the Indian IT personnels and entrepreneurs shabbily, in future ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA) (a) and (b) 11 Indian IT professionals working for the Indian Firml Flex Solutions Pvt. Ltd., were detained recently by the Dutch Police on charges of visa fraud. The Chief Executive Officer of the firm, based in the United Kingdom, was also detained by the U.K. authorities following a request for his extradition from the Dutch Government. The arrests were not "unauthorised" in that they were carried out in accordance with the laws of the countries concerned. None of the detainees have reported harassment at the hands of the authorities while in detention.

(c) Cases of detention of Indian IT professionals have been reported in the recent past in Malaysia and Indonesia.

(d) The Government of India has conveyed to the Governments of the countries concerned the seriousness with which it views such incidents.